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Origins of Inventions.⁵—This volume is an expansion of the principles laid down by Prof. Mason in a paper on the Birth of Invention written in 1891. Briefly stated, the author's views are to this effect. Invention is stimulated by human wants. In its broad sense the term covers not only things, but languages, institutions, æsthetic arts, philosophies, creeds and cults. Invention is based on change. This change is in both structure and function, and proceeds from simple to complex, and is also always a change from the natural to the artificial. Prof. Mason finds that these changes follow a definite law of evolution which he states at length. In each culture-area of the earth such styles of invention have been elaborated as to confer upon the people thereof their local or tribal traits.

The book is one of the Contemporary Science Series and conforms in appearance with the other volumes of that series.

A Pretty Book on Plants and Insects.⁶—Professor Weed has shown, in this little book, that it is possible to write a popular work which does not contain the usual preponderance of error and false statement. One is sometimes tempted to say that whenever a popular and readable book appears on a scientific subject, it will certainly turn out to be bad so far as the science is concerned, and too often in the end one is justified in making this severe statement. Here, however, we have an attractive book which is very readable—in fact, popular—and yet it is not full of error. Let any one read the succeeding chapters on the glaucous willow, mayflower, spring beauty, purple trillium, Jack-in-the-pulpit, showy orchis, pink lady's-slipper, fringed Polygala, Canada lily and common thistle, and he will have learned much about plant structure and reproduction, as well as much about the habits of insects, especially their manner of visiting flowers in search of honey. In each chapter the plant named is the starting point from which the author leads the reader out on long botanical and entomological rambles, thus very greatly increasing the scope of the book. The beautiful illustrations add much to the value and attractiveness of the work. It should, and doubtless will be, widely read.

—CHARLES E. BESSEY.

⁵ *The Origins of Inventions. A Study of Industry among Primitive Peoples.* By Otis T. Mason. London, 1895. Imported by Charles Scribner's Sons.

⁶ *Ten New England Blossoms and their Insect Visitors.* By Clarence Moore Weed. Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1895; 142pp.